

output to, through virtually any printer (dot matrix, ink jet, or laser) you could name. The templates provided for carrying out these orders, while useful, will need at least some modification in most cases. On a brighter note, all of the calculations familiar to mass mailers concerning postage weights, piece counts by zip code, state, etc. are performed by the program, and *FastPak Mail* also provides Nth record sampling and selection by other criteria.

The aforementioned import/export facility works on and with flat ASCII text files that are defined according to precise restrictions concerning data definition, and for import, field names. As stated earlier, making use of this interface can be maddening, with a single misplaced comma capable of rendering your data useless. It does work, however, once you make yourself familiar with its terms. ("Make yourself familiar" is the correct phrase; the documentation doesn't help much).

Should you buy *FastPak Mail*? If broader function database packages have you at your wits end; "I just want to send out my mail!", by all means. If you are currently using another product that enables you to adequately address your mailing list, stick with it.

Corporate Voice **Scandinavian PC Systems**

In a world where everybody and their mother seems content to follow, rather than lead, it's refreshing to come across the occasional trail blazer. Ask anyone who has ever been lost in the woods and at the mercy of such a person, though, and you'll hear a story with two sides: "Sure, he got us out of there, but boy, were we ever nervous until it was over." Working with *Corporate Voice* is a lot like following such an individual. You marvel at some of the things it does, wonder why you've not seen it before, never quite trust it, and then when you have a little time for lucid thoughts, realize that while you respect its abilities, it probably isn't something you want to deal with every day. Then, you reconsider. After all, it was quite an adventure . . .

As its name implies, *Corporate Voice* is designed to be a tool for sculpting and maintaining a standard for all your written communications. If you use it as the developers intended, you'll create models for each type of communicate you produce, from letters to reports to magazine articles and books, and using a series of statistical comparisons, mold all future turnout to match them. Fifteen ready to use models are included with the program, if you're willing to trust someone else's judgement as to what "good" writing is. It sounds simple, and actually is. A less painful way to improve the quality of work you turn out and create a set of guidelines for you and your co-workers to follow probably doesn't exist. Is there a catch? There are several.

Let's preface those with the facts. *Corporate Voice* occupies 550 kilobytes of disk space as distributed and installed, which can be accomplished via a "copy *.*" command or two, or by using the included installation program. The latter asks you about your video capabilities, and then creates batch files for running *Corporate Voice*'s two modules which include command line switches for display and paths to your data and synonym/antonym/forbidden word file. Sample files for use with the program tutorial are included, as are configuration files for use with Microsoft's *Windows* environment. Files vital to the program's operation total just over 365K. Either **NEWSTYLE**, for creating and modifying models, or **REPLICAT**, for matching texts against them, requires about 200K of available RAM to operate, and will reserve up 250K of memory for data space. The entire manual is under 100 pages long, and provides more insight into *Corporate Voice*'s operations than virtually anyone will need, including a thorough explanation of the mathematical theories and formulas behind the product. The prose comprising the manual is very clearly written, understandable by nearly anyone, and even includes a few lucid

DOS tips for novices. The program's help system is strongly context sensitive.

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The basic idea behind *Corporate Voice* is fairly simple. 60% of all writing is made up of 450 words, and fully 80% is covered by just 2450. Therefore, if you design your writing to match these strictures, a very large portion of the population will be able to understand it. Even more people will understand writing with higher percentages of words from these groups, and by definition (if not design), a smaller, presumably better educated segment will be able to follow writing with lower ratios. To customize *Corporate Voice*, you then create a list of trade words for each of your models - words that your target audience may reasonably be expected to understand by virtue of their involvement with the subject matter. They may be compiled by selecting them from a list of words in your model's textual base that don't fall into one of the base groups, or you can create the list manually. Either way, they're stored in a plain ASCII text file, and can be modified later.

Scandinavian PC Systems outlines common sense rules about text framework and nature for creating your models, and the amount of text necessary to create a model that will be valid as a barometer. They recommend at least 20,000 words (fifty single spaced typed pages). Using a 20 mhz 80386 machine, we were able to generate a model based on 77,000 words of text in under five minutes. Making use of your model is simply a matter of telling *Corporate Voice* to compare new writing examples to it. In a matter of seconds, you'll have enough information at your disposal to tweak many different components of the text's style. Where you go from there is up to you, and here's where the catches we talked about earlier come into play.

Besides the 60%/80% compliance issue, *Corporate Voice* addresses proportion of sentence types (split amongst simple, complicated, normal, wordy, and pompous), sentence cadence (based on sentence type, long sentences, and number of long words), and various word-oriented analyses. The program also